

PLAYBOY'S HISTORY OF ASSASSINATION IN AMERICA

PART VII

NO END TO THE MADNESS

article **By JAMES MCKINLEY** *the concluding chapter—as of this bicentennial year—to the nation's bitterest legacy: the killing of Robert Kennedy, the near-fatal shooting of George Wallace and the attempts on Gerald Ford*

We must recognize that this short life can neither be ennobled nor enriched by hatred or revenge. Our lives on this planet are too short and the work to be done too great to let this spirit flourish any longer in our land.

—SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY, April 5, 1968, on the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

ROBERT Francis Kennedy's life was to be short, indeed, in that flourishing spirit of hatred and violence. Only 62 days after Memphis and the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., the spirit descended out of Los Angeles' midnight skies into the tawdry confines of a pantry in the Ambassador Hotel as a Jordanian refugee named Sirhan Bishara Sirhan put a .22-caliber minimag bullet into Kennedy's (text continued on page 118)

ANOTHER KENNEDY FALLS



Above, the eight-shot .22 revolver taken from Sirhan Sirhan on the night Robert Kennedy was shot. Minutes after his victory speech, Kennedy stopped to shake hands with the hotel kitchen staff. Just outside this kitchen, the gunman awaited him in the pantry.

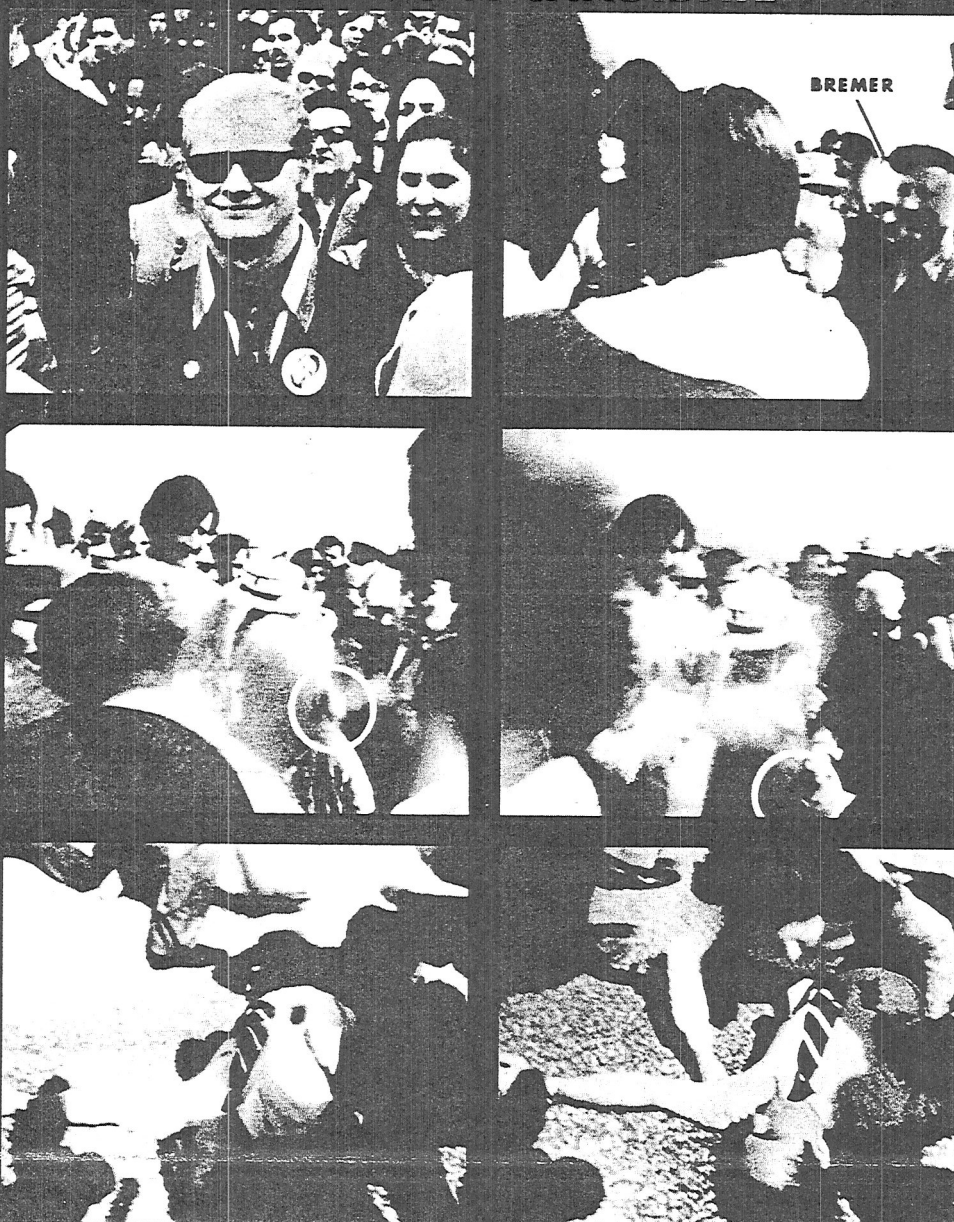




Sirhan empties his gun (left) and Kennedy is down in a pool of blood. He is barely conscious (top) when busboy Juan Romero comforts him with a rosary he presses into his hand. "Am I all right?" Kennedy asks, and wife, Ethel, and sister Mrs. Stephen Smith whisper encouragement to him (above left). When the ambulance arrives, Kennedy is comatose.

After being subdued by Roosevelt Grier and Rafer Johnson, Sirhan is hustled out of the Ambassador Hotel (above right). The caption on this photograph, when it was published, read, "The man has refused to give his name and police are checking fingerprint files." Sirhan's brothers saw the photograph in the morning paper and identified him.

CRIPPLING A CANDIDATE



Like the assassination of John Kennedy, the shooting of George Wallace was caught on film. TV cameras show Arthur Bremer in the crowd, wearing a Wallace campaign button (top left and right). Without warning, he steps forward and begins firing (center left). As Wallace falls, Bremer continues to pump slugs into him (center right). Bremer subdued, Wallace lies bleeding from numerous wounds (bottom left), as his wife throws herself over him (bottom right).

brain. Kennedy died 25½ hours later, on D day, June 6, 1968, at the age of 42. With him died his hopes of gaining the Presidency. With him died, too, any lingering illusion that somehow America, with the deaths of John Kennedy, Malcolm X and King, had been purged of her destructive urges. Indeed, by the end of 1968, it was clear the year was one of the most violent since the end of World War Two. In the burgeoning horror of

Vietnam, the year began with news of the *Tet* offensive, then careened through broad-scale campus antiwar revolts and the decision of President Lyndon Johnson not to seek re-election, through the martyrdom of King and its attendant ghetto riots, on to the murder of Bobby Kennedy and the nightmare of the Democratic Convention's police riot and, finally, to the election of Richard M. Nixon.

Obviously, 1968 was a

year to remember, if only to avoid repeating, for it was certain that the spirit of hatred and revenge that Bobby Kennedy reviled had come to dwell among Americans as seldom before. Yet, for Kennedy, in the City of Angels on the evening of his greatest triumph, in the vital California primary, it may well have seemed otherwise. It may have seemed that it was again possible to believe, as he said ten minutes before he was as-

sassinated: "We can work together [despite] the division, the violence, the disenchantment with our society, the division, whether it's between blacks and whites, between the poor and the more affluent, between age groups or over the war in Vietnam. We are a great country, an unselfish country, a compassionate country."

Sirhan Sirhan didn't, as far as is known, hear Kennedy speak those words. Kennedy had ended his short victory speech in the hotel's Embassy Ballroom about 12:10 A.M. on June fifth. He could then have moved off the podium to his left, exiting through the mass of jubilant supporters, the lines of Kennedy Girls. His bodyguards thought he would and started clearing a way. Simultaneously, a hotel employee suggested he go toward the right. But Karl Uecker, an assistant *maitre de*, surveyed the crowd and led the Senator toward the rear through a curtain in the direction of a nearby service pantry. That seemed a good way to avoid the mauling Bobby had taken throughout the campaign from enthusiastic fans and was a good way to get to his interview with the "pencil press" in another meeting room. In retrospect, it also seemed a random choice, one that might confound a conspiracy.

It didn't confound Sirhan. Near a crude sign reading THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING, he waited by a steam table in the narrow pantry and watched as Kennedy moved along, shaking hands with the kitchen help, trailed by his outdistanced bodyguards, surrounded by journalists who had divided the route. Precisely what happened next is debated. But several things seem clear. There is Sirhan in a peculiar half crouch, smiling, his hand moving to his belt and a little gun coming up in it—like a cap gun, a witness said—and then the gun fires as Sirhan lunges toward Kennedy, almost as though striking at him with a knife, one man said, and

then Kennedy is falling backward toward an ice machine, down to the concrete floor, while the gun keeps firing, again and again, even though Uecker has grabbed Sirhan, and then the shooting stops as others mob the Jordanian, throw him over a steam table and try to tear the gun away. All around, the screams go up: "My God." . . . "Oh, no." . . . "Jesus Christ." A radio announcer blabbers into his recorder and a TV man films the hysteria, both of them disassociated, unbelieving. Five others are wounded also, but Bobby draws the most attention. His blood pools as the struggle continues to subdue the slender, unexpectedly strong assassin. Bobby's friends are among the subduers. George Plimpton takes hold of Sirhan. Later, he will remember Sirhan's "enormously peaceful" eyes. Roosevelt Grier finally secures the gun. He gives it to Rafer Johnson. The two black men shout oaths while people call out, "Kill him, kill the bastard." Rafer fights the lynchers off and Jesse Unruh, characteristically polemical, jumps to the top of the steam table and announces, "We don't want another Dallas. If the system works at all, we are going to try this one." People twist Sirhan's leg, but Grier pins him down while they wait for the cops.

Kennedy, meanwhile, asks, "Am I all right?" Next to his heart, he holds a rosary volunteered by one of the encircling people and twisted around his thumb by Juan Romero, a busboy who has cradled Bobby's head and said, "Come on, Mr. Kennedy, you can make it."

Dr. Stanley Abo probes the wound behind Kennedy's right ear with his finger to relieve the pressure, and Ethel Kennedy, pregnant with their 11th child, and her sister-in-law Mrs. Stephen Smith comfort the near-comatose victim. It takes 17 terrible minutes to get Kennedy out of the maddened pantry and into an ambulance. By that time,

A "FAMILY" AFFAIR



On September 5, 1975, on the grounds of California's capitol, the first known attempt on President Ford's life was made. Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a member of the Charles Manson family, approached Ford in a crowd, pulled out a military-style .45 automatic, pointed it at him and fired. Although she had put a loaded clip into the pistol, there was no cartridge in the chamber.

THE SECOND WAVE



Little more than two weeks after the first attempt, Sara Jane Moore, an ex-FBI informant, fired a shot at the President with a .38 revolver. Immediately below, Ford reacts in shock when the sound of the shot reaches him as he waits in a crowd in front of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. At bottom, police wrestle Moore to the ground. She later stated that she had meant to kill him.



Sirhan is in custody. The cops have pulled him from under Grier at 12:25, hustled him out, read him his rights and thought he looked remarkably collected, almost "smirky." Hoping he can help prevent another Oswald disaster, Unruh rides to the precinct station with the assassin—who refuses to give his name—and later says the swarthy boy mumbled, "I did it for my country." That's hotly disputed, but it's true that in the hours to come, the suspect displays a canny coolness, a sure knowledge of his rights (like Oswald, he'll ask for an A.C.L.U. lawyer; unlike Oswald, he'll get one), an interest in famous murders and remains anonymous until his brothers see his picture in the morning newspaper and tell the police who he is. For now, all the police know is that he probably shot Kennedy with the eight-shot Iver-Johnson .22 revolver that Rafer Johnson had handed over, all eight chambers containing expended cartridge cases, and that he was carrying \$410.66, a clipped David Lawrence column speculating on Kennedy's inconsistency in opposing the Vietnam war while supporting military aid for Israel, two unexpended .22 cartridges, one expended .22 slug, a Kennedy campaign song sheet and an ad inviting the public to an R.F.K. rally at the Ambassador on Sunday, June second. The police wonder if the expended slug was used in target practice and if the ad means he had been stalking the Senator.

If so, he succeeded. Kennedy was fatally wounded, although neurosurgeons did all they could to remove the bone shards and lead fragments from the killing shot, which entered the right mastoid—a honeycomblike bone—to sever arteries and lacerate cells. Had he lived, Kennedy, at best, would have been deaf in the right ear and paralyzed on the right side of his face and would have suffered bad vision and spastic spells. Ted Kennedy and Ethel and Jackie, in from London, looked on as Bobby's life seeped away. His brain died at 6:30 P.M. on June fifth, the EEG wave hardening to a line. His body followed at 1:44 A.M. on June sixth. Now for Sirhan it was murder and for America the agony of another Kennedy funeral. Following a painstaking autopsy, Bobby's body was flown to New York, where it lay in state at St. Patrick's Cathedral on June seventh, the day Sirhan was indicted for R.F.K.'s murder. Coretta King, widowed two months before, came to pay her respects. So did Ralph Abernathy, up from Washington, where the Poor People's March that King had hoped to lead now languished by the Mall in a shantytown called Resurrection City, its members hoping moral suasion would bring the stronger anti-poverty legislation Robert Kennedy had endorsed. President Johnson attended the

High Requiem Mass of June eighth—the day a no-account thief named James Earl Ray was caught in London—and heard Ted Kennedy eulogize his brother: "He should be remembered simply as a good and decent man who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it." Fittingly, only two days before, L.B.J. had issued a call, doomed, as it turned out, for gun-control legislation that would prevent mail-order sale of all firearms and their interstate trade. (Such a law wouldn't have stopped Sirhan, however, since he got his \$25 gun through his brother, who got it from a man who'd gotten it from a woman, who'd gotten it for protection after the Watts riots.)

Robert Kennedy's remains were moved down the roadbed from New York to Washington in a funeral train all too reminiscent of Lincoln's. Kennedy's people, the ones he had counted on to help make him President, filled each window and lined the tracks: black and white, men and women, the aged and the children, people rich and poor, offering homage as best they could.

Robert Kennedy was buried that evening in Arlington Cemetery on a gentle knoll 60 feet from his brother's grave. Unlike his brother's, Robert Kennedy's funeral ceremony was simple, but like his brother's, dampened by rain. After a short liturgy, Bobby's son Joseph Kennedy III received the casket's covering flag. He passed it to his mother. The Kennedys, family-strong and ghostly in the light of myriad candles, moved one by one to kneel and kiss the mahogany coffin. Then it was over.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, for now everyone knew his name, spent June eighth reading and listening to radio music in his jail's infirmary. His leg and finger had been injured in the pantry fracas. He had a few bruises. Otherwise, he was in good health, small (5'3", 120 pounds) and lithe and, according to the New County Jail doctor, "self-satisfied, smug and unremorseful." That façade would crumble frequently in the months to come, as through his lawyers Sirhan learned of the massive evidence against him, testifying to his act, its motivation, its planning. So much incriminated Sirhan that his lawyers—including the estimable Grant Cooper—decided they could only plead that Sirhan's mental capacity to premeditate the crime was diminished, and so Sirhan was really guilty only of second-degree murder. Certainly, their client's behavior, his violent mood swings, suggested that the "diminished capacity" notion might be true. A consulting psychiatrist, Dr. Bernard Diamond, even suspected that Sirhan might have been in some sort of trance when he shot Kennedy—an idea shared by Robert Blair Kaiser, a writer-investigator who participated in the defense planning and later published an invaluable history of

the case. The trance idea was interesting—and jibed with Sirhan's interest in the occult, in thought transference, self-hypnosis and Rosicrucian doctrines—but it was hard to sell to a jury. Sirhan's own story wouldn't stand up, either. Who would believe, even if it were true, that he'd gone to the Ambassador, gotten "dizzy" on tom collinses and decided to drive home but was too drunk, took his gun from the car so it wouldn't be stolen, went again into the hotel for coffee, found some in the area behind the Embassy Ballroom stage and then was somehow in the pantry, where he guessed he did shoot Kennedy, but he couldn't remember a thing about it? No, liquor-induced amnesia might contribute, but it couldn't carry the whole defense. Sirhan's attorneys in time agreed on a narrow defense. He killed Kennedy, but he wasn't in a rational state of mind; was, in fact, rather crazy.

For its part, the prosecution set out to prove that Sirhan assassinated Kennedy with malice aforethought, motivated by Kennedy's pro-Israel statements. They reasoned that those statements, particularly after the Six-Day War humiliated the Arabs in 1967, had so inflamed the Jordanian that he undertook vengeance, thus becoming the prototypal lone assassin: a paranoiac but legally sane young man with a political fixation and a savior complex. The state's expert psychiatric witnesses would debunk the defense's contention that Sirhan was demented. Of course, the state had plenty of other evidence, too, eventually ten full volumes assembled by an investigative team called Special Unit Senator. (Those volumes, although repeatedly sought by interested parties, have remained secret, causing speculation that not everything in them fingers Sirhan as a lone killer.)

The trial began January 7, 1969, and ended three months later with a guilty verdict. Sirhan, the jury decided, had willfully killed Kennedy. The convicted assassin remained cool and cocky, even after he was—despite a plea from Ted Kennedy—condemned to death. "But I am famous," Sirhan said. "I achieved in a day what it took Kennedy all his life to do." Sirhan also asserted, as he had before, that there was no conspiracy and that he was not afraid to die. (In fact, Sirhan's death sentence later was reduced to life imprisonment and he now is eligible for parole in 1986.) For the state, the victory was twofold: Not only had it proved Sirhan was a lone killer but it had protected him and his rights, and at last—after John Kennedy and King—brought an assassin to justice.

Not without considerable help, to be sure. The state had the usual abundance of investigative resources (the trial alone cost \$609,792) and the ability to select from the immense bank of data what best suited its case. The press, which otherwise might have published items that

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of the best from his first three albums on Flying Dutchman. It's a must for anyone interested in understanding where Scott-Heron is coming from. *Winter in America* may be hard to find, since it was issued on Strata-East, a small cooperative label with limited distribution. It contains *The Bottle*, which was a surprising hit in the New York and Paris *discos*. On their first two albums for Arista Records—*The First Minute of a New Day* and *From South Africa to South Carolina*—Scott-Heron and Jackson are dragged down by the unimaginative unprofessionalism of their producers. Songs with potential are ruined by the bland accompaniment of The Midnight Band and a second vocalist who wasn't needed.

Of course, as an educator, a teacher, a preacher and a hip lip, Scott-Heron cares not a whit for such considerations. The message is the music. But for a singing poet, the music is also the message, and if it isn't corrected, he might have to run

for Congress, since no one will be buying the records.

"But I'm not interested in politics," he says, "because there are too many gangsters involved in Government. Actually, I could run it, because anybody could run it if they ran it according to the rules. The Government as it exists now could really respond to the needs of the country. But there are too many gangsters making too many deals, and compromises that don't benefit people except in a roundabout way. If they followed the Constitution, they would be a lot closer to what's happening, because the Constitution and the Bill of Rights talk about justice, liberty and equality—and that damn near covers it all. But I heard they took a copy of the Constitution around to people on the street and they thought it was a Communist document. That's how far we've come."



"Oh, damn! 'Premature ejaculation'—go back ten spaces, lose your turn...."

NO END TO THE MADNESS

(continued from page 120)

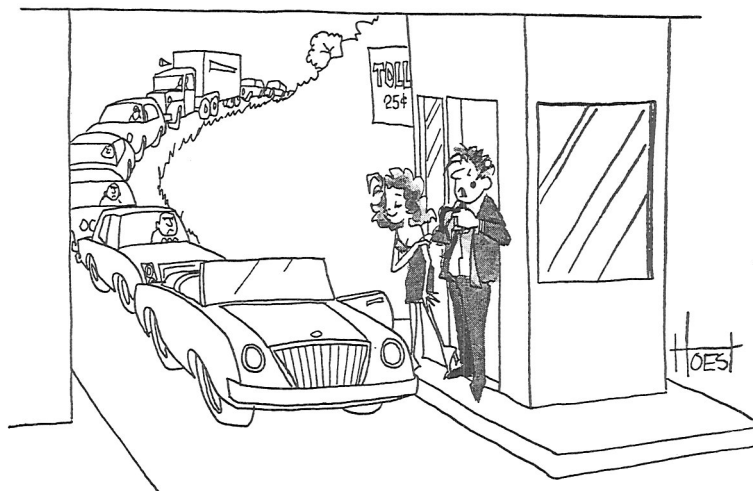
questioned the state's developing case, was gagged by a court ruling issued soon after Sirhan's arraignment (still, enterprising newsmen chased down leads, perhaps figuring they couldn't prejudice the case any more than had Mayor Sam Yorty, who, right after the murder, proclaimed that Sirhan was "a sort of loner who harbored Communist inclinations, favored Communists of all types. . . . [His diary said] that R.F.K. must be assassinated before June 5, 1968"). Then, too, the defense's decision to say Sirhan was a victim of diminished mental capacity meant the questions of a conspiracy, even important questions of physical evidence, were not deeply probed in Sirhan's behalf. Instead, the trial was mainly a show of psychiatric testimony.

Thus, the trial of Sirhan did not solve Kennedy's murder—an outcome to consider for those who believe a trial for James Earl Ray might have cleared up King's assassination. It's true much was revealed about the sort of man Sirhan was and about facts pointing to his planning and execution of the crime. But much else was slighted, leaving us with speculations that have survived. What do we now know—and what do we still question—about Sirhan and Kennedy?

We know, thanks to Sirhan's notebook and the work of writers such as Kaiser, that the convicted assassin was a mightily disturbed young man. In his diary-notebook, snatched up by the police when Sirhan's brother allowed them to search his room (a seizure of dubious legality), he wrote: "May 18 9:45 AM—68 My determination to eliminate R.F.K. is becoming more the more of an unshakable obsession . . . R.F.K. must die—RFK must be killed Robert F. Kennedy must be assassinated . . . please pay to the order." There are many such homicidal notes, several juxtaposed with entries about money, which has led some to suspect that Sirhan was paid to kill Kennedy (but no untoward sums were ever discovered—Sirhan worked, and in April 1968, he got \$1705 in workmen's compensation, due after a fall from a horse in 1966, an event to which we'll return). In one place, Sirhan writes that he advocates "the overthrow of the current President of the fucken United States of America," and in another, that the solution is to "do away with its leaders." Certainly, it seems Sirhan's attitude fits that of an assassin. His diary, according to Dr. David Rothstein, author of *Presidential Assassination Syndrome*, exhibits the same paranoia as that of those who write threatening letters to U. S. Presidents. (The notebooks are his, according to handwriting experts, and not forgeries, a fact that some conspiracy buffs contest, saying the notebooks, like Arthur Bremer's, were dictated to Sirhan by master plotters.)

What brought Sirhan to this attitude? Perhaps as revealing as any remark he ever made was one to his mother upon arriving in America in 1957. The 12-year-old boy asked, "When we become citizens, Momma, will we get blond hair and blue eyes?" His question came out of the miasmic sort of childhood psychiatrists say is common to many of our assassins and accused assassins: one marked by a lack of love from the father (Sirhan's father, people testified, often beat the boy) and by traumatic upset (in Sirhan's case, the barbaric 1948 Jewish-Arab war, much of it carried on in Jerusalem, where the Sirhans lived before the fighting uprooted them. The war also later provided Sirhan with a political cause similar to John Wilkes Booth's Confederacy, Guiteau's Stalwart Republicanism, Czolgosz' anarchism, Oswald's Cuba). Such early experiences can cause *anomie*, a feeling that one belongs to nothing, and a consequent desire to become—however it's accomplished—someone who does belong. For example, the prototypal blond, blue-eyed American—that, too, a fantasy—who had not been ousted by Jews from his home, who had not seen bombings in Jerusalem, who had not stood around refugee camps at the age of four in a spell cast by the horrors of continuous killing and maiming. Nor is that the only effect on embryonic assassins. Often there is a feeling of impotence (during the early morning hours after his arrest, Sirhan said, "We're all puppets"), which can spark desires for self-improvement, for secret societies, for anything to enhance self-esteem. That was true of Sirhan.

At Pasadena's John Muir High School, the swarthy foreigner was shy and envious of the white-skinned Americans, with their cars and money and fathers (Sirhan's deserted the family to return to Palestine after only six months in America). At Pasadena City College—whence issues the Rose Bowl Queen every year—he amassed Fs while flirting with collegiate communism (one leftish fellow student, Walter Crowe, afterward feared he had inspired Sirhan to kill Kennedy by discussing the virtues of terrorism) and Nasserism and Castroism and Rosicrucianism. Sirhan then badly wanted a Mustang and money (awaiting trial, he fantasized blackmailing first Lyndon Johnson, then Richard Nixon, for a pardon and money, and then James Hoffa for \$150,000, the threat always the same: They ordered him to kill Kennedy). In lieu of riches, Sirhan experimented with moving objects and people by transmitting thoughts to them. He tried automatic writing and gazed at candles, attempting self-hypnosis. He boasted that he once conjured Kennedy's face in a mirror. Sirhan became excited by the success of black militancy during 1967 and 1968 and enraged by Israel's victory over the Arabs in 1967 (June second of that year, he entered in his notebook, "A Decla-



"However, next time, please try to have the correct change."

ration of War Against American Humanity" for injustices visited upon himself). In April 1968, Kaiser reports, Sirhan was intrigued by the successful escape of King's assassin. Assassination itself interested him and he underlined pertinent passages in history books. And so Sirhan wandered through his early 20s, among odd doctrines and peoples, a lonely bed-wetting boy who had nightmares about walking into a great darkness, who worried about his food, who was both proud and ashamed of his Arabness and who detested Robert Kennedy's Zionist supporters—he once interrupted coitus when a girl confessed she was Jewish—although thinking with another mind that Bobby was for the underdog, and he was one of those for sure.

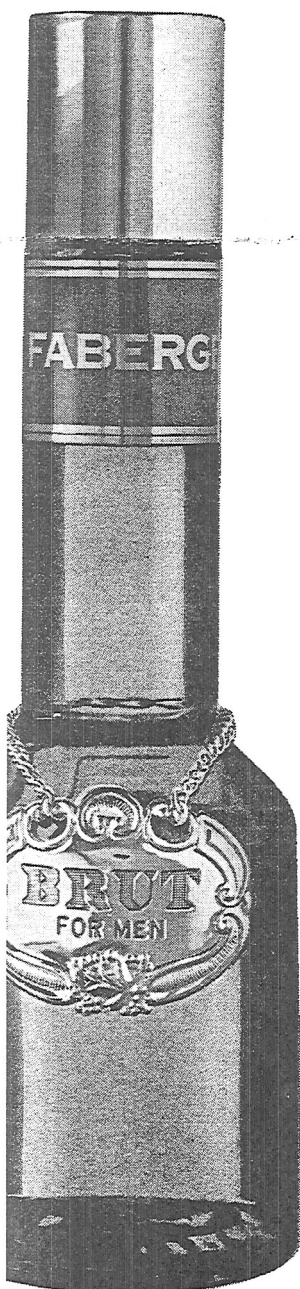
Sirhan was also, one defense psychiatrist said, a chronic and deteriorating paranoid (in the top 95 percent of tests) with persistent symptoms of "delusional false beliefs." One such belief, incidentally, was the messianic notion that he had elected Nixon by shooting Kennedy, which in history's cold light seems not so delusional. Diamond believed Sirhan's predominant appearance of lucidity came from feigning sanity. That opinion came partly from Diamond's sessions with a hypnotized Sirhan—predictably, he went under easily—during one of which the Jordanian writhed in horror as he melded the bombings of his youth with the Phantom jets Kennedy approved sending to Israel.

Israel, the detested usurper, obsessed Sirhan in both hypnotic and conscious states—a fixation that became fraught with ironies at his trial, where among his defenders he had both a Jewish civil rights attorney and an Arabian-American lawyer (who apparently had been retained by Arab interests to ensure that Sirhan's trial provided maximum airing

of Arab grievances). Israel's linkage to Kennedy was obvious. "I hated his guts, sir," Sirhan told Diamond. In one hypnotic session, according to Kaiser, Sirhan re-enacted the murder, reaching for his left hip, muttering, "You son of a bitch," pointing his finger and crooking it several times around the imagined trigger. Diamond in time hypothesized that Sirhan was entranced when he shot Kennedy, in a dissociated state brought into his fragmented mind by Kennedy's presence in the hotel, the booze and maybe the bright lights and mirrors of the campaign rooms through which he drifted before the shooting (at the trial, however, testimony was offered that Sirhan had lurked mostly in a dark corridor). Such a trance, some think, could have been induced by a coconspirator who had programed Sirhan, one of his occultist acquaintances, perhaps. Special Unit Senator's investigation, however, found no evidence of the numerous meetings many hypnotic-suggestion experts believe would have been necessary to assure control of an assassin. Sirhan himself suggested (and Diamond and Kaiser thought it possible) that he may have killed Kennedy due to autosuggestion, his hatred and lust for vengeance so strong in his subconscious that they took over his body and rational mind. In the end, several questions bubbled out of these psychological swamps. For instance, did Sirhan, in and out of hypnosis, steadfastly deny there was a conspiracy because he had been programed to do so or because he was schizophrenic, or both? What, then, was the import of his blocking on psychological test questions asking if he felt people were controlling his mind? Did he block because he was controlled by others or because he felt another of his selves steering him? Or was it all, as some prosecutors felt, a screen erected by a

ut for Men.

f you have
ny doubts
out yourself,
try
nothing else.



ave, after shower, after anything.
Brut® lotion by Fabergé.



basically sane, cunning man who had planned the crime and executed it alone, in cold blood?

Whatever the answer, Sirhan obviously was not normal. His family, less fancy than the doctors, attributed Sirhan's increasingly bizarre behavior to that fall from the horse. After his college flunk-out, Sirhan wanted to be a jockey. He worked awhile at Santa Anita and in 1966 got a job as an exercise boy, actually riding, at a ranch called Granja Vista Del Rio near Corona, California. There, on a foggy September 25th morning, up on a horse named Hy-Vera, Sirhan was thrown against a metal post, where he lay crumpled, crying and bleeding. "He never coulda become a jockey," his boss later said. "He sort of lost his nerve." After the mishap, Sirhan didn't work much, although his notebook suggested he continued to covet the things America was supposed to bestow on her immigrants. His last job was at an organic-foods store in Pasadena. He quit in the spring of 1968, about the time he got his gun and his workmen's-compensation checks (several of America's other assassins have been unemployed or unsuccessful when they pulled the trigger). From March on, Sirhan moved inexorably toward the Ambassador's pantry, albeit through the half-light of facts and rumors that surrounds assassination reconstructions.

He took to practicing a lot with his gun and intensified his occult experiments. His notebook entries became more violent and disjointed. Sirhan watched the gathering California primary campaign and by May 18 (this, too, re-created in hypnosis) had confided those murderous desires to his diary. Then, it seems, he began stalking Robert Kennedy. Witnesses later said they thought they had seen Sirhan at R.F.K. campaign functions on May 20 and 24. On June first, Sirhan seems to have practiced shooting and bought some ammunition (the salesclerk at first said he was with two other men—coconspirators?—but he later recanted). Then, in the evening, he watched the key debate between R.F.K. and Eugene McCarthy.

The next day, Sirhan admits, he attended the R.F.K. rally at the Ambassador, enticed by the public invitation and beguiled by the notion that a Kennedy, even a hated Kennedy, would thus solicit the great unwashed. Sirhan's activities on Monday, June third, are unclear. He may have driven his '56 pink-and-white De Soto (so unlike the Mustangs he and James Earl Ray liked) to San Diego to an R.F.K. speech. More likely, he drove around awhile, maybe shot some pool or some targets, then went home to watch TV. But there is a story, admired by conspiracy theorists, that on June third, Sirhan and a Mexican-looking kid were picked up by a freakish Los Angeles character—minister, gambler and all-around hustler—while hitchhiking in

downtown L.A. The preacher said he drove them to a brief sidewalk meeting with a slick dark-haired fellow and a blonde girl, then took Sirhan alone to another rendezvous with somebody who worked in the kitchen at the Ambassador. During all this, the man said he made a deal to sell Sirhan a horse, a deal to be consummated the next morning. But Sirhan didn't show. Instead, it was the dark-haired fellow, accompanied by the girl and the Mexican, who wanted the horse delivered near the Ambassador that evening of June fourth; but no deal was struck and the preacher went off to Oxnard to sell the Gospel and the next day learned of the Kennedy shooting, and so came forward with this story. The police in time decided, based mostly on polygraph tests, that the minister had lied. Anyway, few thought it feasible that conspirators would plan to escape in a horse trailer. But the story didn't die, since it fit with other conspiracy tales, as we'll see.

In any event, most of Sirhan's activities on June fourth are documented. About 11:30 A.M., he was at the San Gabriel Valley Gun Club. There he stayed until it closed at five o'clock, firing almost 400 rounds of mini-mags (uploaded .22 long-rifle cartridges) and standard .22s. When asked by another shooter about his small gun, he said, "It could kill a dog." He also offered expert advice to a housewife about her shooting (although her blonde hair and fondness for firearms were suspect, the woman later was cleared of any role in a conspiracy). Leaving the range, Sirhan went to a hamburger joint, became distressed over two newspaper accounts—one of renewed skirmishing between Jordan and Israel—visited with some Arabs he'd met at college and then, failing to find the rally, headed for the Ambassador.

Sirhan arrived about 8:30. Police think he carried his gun stuck in his waistband but Sirhan's hypnotic reconstruction has him fetching it later. Either way, he left his wallet and identification in his car parked two blocks away. Soon the slight figure in blue-velour shirt and denim pants was mixing with the Kennedy crowds. He inquired of an electrician where Kennedy stayed and if he had bodyguards. Then he was seen in the press room, peering at a teletype tapping out the news of Kennedy's building victory. Next he seems to mingle with the crowd in the Embassy Ballroom, and then he's drinking a tom collins and remarking about the heat in the rooms, and then he's seeking entrance to the anteroom behind the stage from which Kennedy will soon speak but is rebuffed and returns to the adjoining pantry corridor, where he asks a bus boy if Kennedy will be coming through there soon. All around him ascends the hysteria of victory, the noise of the mariachi bands, of the campaign song *This Man Is Your Man*, of the cheers, "We

want Bobby! We want Bobby!" and the applause and laughter as the candidate appears and addresses them, and thanks them, and then comes off the stage and down the corridor toward Sirhan, standing between the steam table and the ice machine, waiting with those peaceful eyes. Lastly, there is the sound of shots and screams.

Immediately after the murder, the din intensified. Noise about the Girl in the Polka Dot Dress came first. Sandy Serrano, a campaign follower, said she was on a fire escape escaping the heat when a girl in a white dress with black polka dots came up, along with two young men, a *chicano* and a hirsute Anglo, one of them maybe Sirhan. Then, a few minutes later, Serrano said, the girl and a man came pelting down the fire escape, shouting, "We've shot him, we've shot him." A mystery was born (and one whose cast dovetailed with the minister's story). It deepened later, when Thomas Vincent DiPierro, son of an Ambassador maître de, told police he'd seen the smiling assassin, holding on to a tray stand, just before the murder. He seemed to be with a pretty girl in a white dress with black polka dots. The press at once set out in full cry to find this vanished conspirator. Before long, a go-go dancer named Cathey Fulmer volunteered that she might be the girl, since she was wearing a polka-dot scarf. But that didn't check out as anything except publicity seeking by a sick girl (Miss Fulmer committed suicide ten months later and students of the "dying witnesses" in the J.F.K. assassination pondered the significance). Then Valerie Schulte, a Kennedy Girl who'd been in the pantry, said she was the polka-dotted girl, a statement disputed by other witnesses. Eventually, the police concluded that Serrano and DiPierro had "contaminated" each other's stories before giving their statements, and so discounted the tale (they believed DiPierro's account of Sirhan's shooting Kennedy up close, though). Nonetheless, today many think there was a girl and that she was part of a conspiracy.

Endlessly, the rumors came. A psychotic skyjacker and bad-check artist told the FBI that Castro had Bobby done in to complete vengeance on the Kennedys for their anti-Cuba activities. A French "investigator," and several Americans, suggested that Arab terrorists—possibly dispatched by Nasser—had killed Kennedy in retaliation for the U.S.'s friendship with Zionists. Donald Freed, who collaborated with Mark Lane in the J.F.K.-conspiracy film *Executive Action*, recently has revived the programmed-assassin idea in a pulpish book that supposes Sirhan was programmed through sex and hypnotism to kill Kennedy for the same right-wingers who had arranged King's death. Another writer previously vouchsafed to police that he had information indicating that the CIA had killed Bobby to keep him, when he became

President, from investigating his brother's murder and discovering that the CIA had done it. What's more, the writer had told Jim Garrison of his suspicions and Big Jim had thundered, Why not?

That made a weird sort of sense. Garrison and the assassinated Kennedys were, after all, a spectral dance team twirling through America's recent political murders, as the ghosts of assassinations past. No wonder that rumors are still mongered tying together the deaths of John and Robert Kennedy via a convoluted guilt-by-association skein of big labor, organized crime, Castro, anti-Castroites, dissident U. S. intelligence agents, Watergate and even the late Howard Hughes.

Compared with such conjectures, the puzzles in the physical evidence seem heavy as gold. Dr. Thomas Noguchi's thorough autopsy provided the most basic data, which paradoxically gave impetus to several questions about the assassination. (Even so, the autopsy contrasted with the shoddy performance wrought on J.F.K.; to assure proper procedures, the Government flew in three observers from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, ironically including the much-maligned Colonel Pierre Finck, one of J.F.K.'s autopsy physicians.) Noguchi found three wounds: the fatal right-mastoid shot, which left a slug too shattered for testing; a nonfatal entry behind the right armpit, the slug exiting at the front of the right shoulder, leaving no testable lead fragments; another wound one half inch away from the shot above in the right armpit, this slug coming to rest in the lower rear of the neck, whence it was extracted for ballistics testing. The killing shot, Noguchi established, laid a powder tattoo one inch long on Kennedy, which meant the gun was no farther away from him than three inches. The other, wounding shots came from within about six inches. An examination of Kennedy's suit jacket showed a fourth bullet had passed through his right shoulder pad, going on to bounce around and wound one of the five other victims—or so the police thought. Skeptics were not so sure, and their queries clustered around these crucial factors: (1) the assassin's location as deduced from the wounds versus eyewitness accounts of where Sirhan and Kennedy were; (2) the fate of the missing bullets (indeed, how many shots actually were fired and where did they all go?); and (3) what the testable bullets recovered from Kennedy and two other victims revealed.

Critics of the police investigation pointed out that several eyewitnesses said Sirhan was never closer to Kennedy than a foot. How, then, could he have fired the fatal shot from three inches away? In addition, many witnesses (there were over 70 in the pantry who were interviewed) thought Sirhan was in front of Kennedy, and thus could not have shot him from behind, as the autopsy showed. Former

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U. S. Congressman Allard Lowenstein is one who believes in a "second gun" and thinks Sirhan's trial ignored the conspiracy angle. He quotes the assistant maître de, Karl Uecker (who was guiding Kennedy through the pantry), as saying Sirhan's gun was always in front of them and no closer than 18 inches. Moreover, that Uecker believes Sirhan fired only two shots before Uecker knocked him back onto the steam table, so how could Kennedy have been hit by four bullets from Sirhan's gun?

The question is tantalizing. Yet, at least two key witnesses dispute Uecker's recollection. A security guard named Thane Eugene Cesar, who figures in another speculation, said Kennedy turned just before he was shot. Vincent DiPierro, who was close enough to Kennedy to be splattered with his blood, also says that while it's true Sirhan was to Kennedy's right front, about three feet away, before the shooting started, the gunman then lunged forward, coming close to Kennedy, and at the same time Kennedy turned leftward to shake more hands. That movement, these witnesses think, brought Bobby's back to Sirhan. (Dr. Noguchi thinks a first shot into the head could have sent Kennedy into a "body spinning," which would have brought his back toward Sirhan and account for the additional wounds there.) As for the number of shots, DiPierro, again with many others, remembered a burst of shots (presumably the first attack) and then several more as during his struggle Sirhan kept firing wildly, throwing bullets all over the narrow pantry.

Certainly, Sirhan's eight-shot gun was empty when it was all over. And six people were hit. Seven bullets or fragments were retrieved from the victims (three of them unmutated enough for ballistics testing), and the eighth—according to the police, the one that went through Kennedy's chest—went upward through ceiling panels and "was lost somewhere in the ceiling interspace." Splendid, except that there were at least 12 bullet tracks: three in Kennedy and one in his suit coat, three in the ceiling panels and one each in Paul Schrade (a union leader and Kennedy supporter), William Weisel, Irwin Stroll, Ira Goldstein and Elizabeth (Evans) Young. How can there be so many? Doesn't it mean another gun fired from someplace? It does to Lowenstein and journalist Ted Charach (unsurprisingly, the maker of a movie called *The Second Gun*), and to Vincent Bugliosi, who as deputy district attorney in 1970 prosecuted and put away Charles Manson and part of the Family, wrote the best seller *Helter Skelter* and now is running for district attorney in Los Angeles.

The police believe eight shots could, indeed, have caused all the holes and wounds. One bullet penetrated a suspended ceiling panel, they say, ricocheted

off the concrete beyond it and went down through another panel to strike Young's head. The third hole in the ceiling panels was made by the lost bullet (other wild shots bounced off the floor, they think, to wound people in odd places like the buttocks and lower leg). Critics say that's absurd and bring forth what they regard as refuting evidence. They contend the bullet that was recovered from Young is this case's "magic bullet," akin to that which wounded John Connally in Dallas, since it's supposed to have done so many things and all without losing more than eight grains of its original 39-grain weight. Furthermore, they think Young was bending over when she was struck, so how did the deflected bullet hit her forehead? Defenders of the investigation remind us that bullets can do exceedingly peculiar things, and that no one, not even Mrs. Young, knows what position she was in when hit.

Undaunted, those who are skeptical of the official explanation then ask why the ceiling panels in question were destroyed by the police? As part of a "monstrous cover-up" of second-gun evidence? Why, too, when the evidence was recently re-examined was the left sleeve missing from Kennedy's suit coat? Because there were more holes in it? And is the decision not to release the investigative report simply more proof of a whitewash? The police reply that the panels were unfortunately destroyed by a low-ranking officer, a year after the trial, as part of what he thought was "routine." The coat sleeve was removed by physicians at one of the hospitals Kennedy was sent to and, anyway, there were no bullet holes or other evidence connected with it. The report is withheld, authorities say, because it necessarily included interviews with people who might be harmed if what they said about other people or organizations became public. There was no second gunman, the police repeat. None. The bullets add up to eight.

Bugliosi disagrees and says he has proof to the contrary. He cites photos showing Sergeants Charles Wright and Robert Rozzi by a doorframe, pointing at what appeared to them to be bullet holes (the doorframe, be it noted, is a goodly distance from the murder scene). If they were bullet holes, of course, there had to be another gun, since Sirhan's revolver held only eight shots, each already accounted for, however curiously. Though the L.A. district attorney, like his predecessors, assured Bugliosi that the holes were not made by bullets, the Manson prosecutor obtained a written statement from Rozzi that said it looked to him like there was a "small-caliber bullet" lodged inside one hole, and whatever the object was, he thought somebody else had later removed it. Trying to check this story, Bugliosi talked by telephone with Wright, who, Bugliosi claims, told him it definitely

was a bullet they'd seen and no doubt someone had removed it. But when Bugliosi met Wright the next day, the officer refused to give a deposition and softened his talk, saying that the object just *looked* like a bullet and he had only *assumed* someone had removed it. Lowenstein points out that the police took several doorframes as evidence, presumably because they might pertain to the case. The police say the frames revealed no bullet holes (the frames were also routinely destroyed), just as a new search of the pantry area late in 1975 revealed no signs of additional shots. Predictably, Lowenstein, Bugliosi, et al., attack the official findings, claiming that two .22 slugs booked as evidence bear traces of wood, though police said they were found in Sirhan's car (how that relates to the doorframe mystery is unclear). They maintain other cops and witnesses have said more shots were fired, even that there exists (in L.A.P.D. files) other clear evidence of a conspiracy, like Sirhan's fingerprints in that minister's pickup truck, proving that the itinerant preacher told the truth about Sirhan, the blonde, the "Las Vegas-type" slicker and the horse deal. Yet, to this date, unfortunately for the conspiracy theorists, none of these claims have been documented.

Actually, the only second-gun theory with even faint plausibility doesn't much relate to such protestations. Its advocates, notably Charach, believe Cesar had the second gun. Certainly, Cesar was armed in the pantry. He was a security guard trailing Kennedy when the fatal shots were fired. Two TV men have said they saw Cesar with his gun drawn after the shooting, and Cesar once was quoted as saying he drew his gun (though he also denied this). So, did Cesar shoot Kennedy from behind and up close? Not with his service revolver, which was a .38-caliber weapon. With what then? By the baroque reasoning of second-gun theorists, with a concealed .22, a gun that he later disposed of to a friend variously reported as residing now in Arkansas, Indiana or other points east. Charach claims he has interviewed this mysterious friend and that, sure enough, he says Cesar sold him a .22 after the assassination, telling him there might be repercussions if it were found among Cesar's possessions. Assuming Charach is right, though, still doesn't mean Cesar was a second assassin (really, anyone in that pantry who owned a .22 might fear repercussions). No one has tied Cesar to Sirhan, and the odds against *two* independent assassins in the pantry are long, indeed. As for Cesar's purported motive, it's been suggested he was a right-wing racist who hated Bobby for his support of black civil rights. Again, that may be so, but it doesn't prove anything. At base, none of the Cesar story makes sense, except to those who cannot for whatever reasons—financial,

emotional, political—accept that Sirhan did it alone.

Nevertheless, the questioning of that conclusion continues. Most recently, a new ballistics test was made as a result of separate petitions filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court by Schrade and by CBS (as part of its inquiry into the killing). Both parties wanted another test to determine if Sirhan's pistol fired all the shots. But why? Hadn't the L.A.P.D.'s ballistics man, DeWayne Wolfer, firmly established at the trial that test-fired slugs from Sirhan's gun matched those taken from the victims? Yes and no. The slugs were said to match. But we recall that the ballistics evidence was never challenged in court, since his attorney readily admitted Sirhan shot Kennedy. No challenge, that is, despite confusion sown by what Wolfer called "mislabeling" of a trial exhibit. It seems People's Exhibit Number 55, which contained the test slugs, bore a tag listing the slugs as fired by a revolver with a serial number different from that of Sirhan's gun. Wolfer explained he *had* used another Iver-Johnson for powder-tattoo tests (thus sparing Sirhan's pistol any possible damage) and had by mistake put *its* serial number on the envelope containing what were, really and truly, slugs from Sirhan's pistol. Skeptics doubted this and began claiming Sirhan's pistol was never test-fired, had maybe even been destroyed (the L.A.P.D. said no, it had gotten rid of only the twin Iver-Johnson). Soon, skepticism became the rule as two criminalists announced that bullets taken from Kennedy did not match one taken from another victim. William Harper, a respected California expert, first studied the seven recovered bullets. Using a scanning camera rather than the conventional comparison microscope, Harper concluded in 1970 that the bullet taken from Kennedy's neck did not match that taken from the abdomen of Weisel, primarily because the R.F.K. slug had 23 minutes' greater rifling angle than did the Weisel slug (23 minutes is .001 percent of a circle). Harper also decided that the Kennedy bullet had only one cannellure (knurled groove circling the base), while the Weisel bullet had two. This assertion interested Herbert MacDonell, a professor of criminalistics and a frequent defense witness in notorious cases (MacDonell disputed the state's evidence in the James Earl Ray evidentiary hearing in 1974). Appearing in May 1974 at hearings convened by former L.A. county supervisor Baxter Ward (who then, like Bugliosi now, was running for higher office), MacDonell explained that the difference in cannellures meant there probably were two guns. You see, all Sirhan had in his gun, so the cartridge cases prove, were mini-mags manufactured by Cascade Cartridge,

Incorporated, in Lewiston, Idaho—a company that puts two cannellures on all its mini-mags.

With such claims abroad, the pressure for a new ballistics test mounted. It became irresistible after Wolfer testified he couldn't exactly remember the test results other than the positive match of test slugs to Sirhan's gun. He remembered a spectrographic test (which would show if all the bullets had the same metallic composition, thus the same manufacturer), but the results apparently "had been destroyed." Also, he'd nixed a more sophisticated neutron-activation analysis, feeling it was unreliable.

In late 1975, Judge Robert Wenke decided the matter needed clearing up once and for all. He ordered retesting of Sirhan's gun. A group of seven firearms experts, chosen with the agreement of all concerned, was impaneled. Four test slugs were fired from Sirhan's revolver, examined by each expert and on October 7, 1975, the conclusions were announced.

The experts agreed that there was no evidence that more than one gun fired the bullets; that all the slugs had two, not one, cannellures; that the Kennedy, Stroll, Goldstein and Weisel slugs had "similar characteristics"; and that there was no significant variation in rifling angle between the Kennedy and Weisel bullets. So much, it would seem, for the second-gun theory. Yet the "moral crusade," as Charach calls it, marches on, ever seeking to prove a conspiracy, to get a new trial for Sirhan. It seems the conspiracy advocates would test anything, except the strength of their beliefs, against what seems, overwhelmingly, to be the central fact: Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, by himself, killed Robert Kennedy. He may have been drunk, or entranced, or possessed of a rational if murderous hatred, but it seems he did it. At last report—to CBS' Dan Rather—Sirhan said simply that there was no conspiracy, that he can't believe any external force influenced him, that so far as killing Kennedy goes, he just doesn't remember.

But we remember. Perhaps remember too well how we had lost another leader to another assassin, and in the process perhaps lost another irreplaceable piece of our national self. And, in 1972—when we knew in full what Vietnam meant, even as Watergate was rising behind its stone wall—we had yet another memory. This one came courtesy of a fat-faced bundle of frustrations named Arthur Herman Bremer.

Bremer's story is not long, nor should it be. He was, after all, a failed assassin, and we've seen how most assassins are failures to begin with. There he was on May 15, 1972, at the Laurel Shopping Plaza in Maryland, blond and resplendent in a red, white and blue shirt all plastered with Wallace buttons, his empty eyes concealed by sunglasses, his perpetual smirky smile flashing from the second

row, as he watched George Corley Wallace mumble platitudes, working the crowd, and then Bremer thrust his snub-nosed .38 between a couple named Speigle, across the rope, and fired five times at point-blank range. Amazingly, Wallace lived, albeit wounded four times and paralyzed from the waist down (three others also were hit in the volley—they recovered). And so Bremer joined historical company with the likes of John Schrank, who tried but failed to kill Teddy Roosevelt. It seems clear Bremer dreamed of himself as a great figure in history. "I am one three-billionth of the world's history," the 21-year-old wrote in his journal, filled elsewhere with his admiration of Oswald and Sirhan, and with a corresponding hatred for Richard Nixon, for George Wallace, for the haves of the world. "I am a Hamlet," he wrote, while complaining about headaches and pains in his chest. On another occasion, he confided he'd like to see his name in the history books and after his arrest, he told a cop, "Just stay with me and you'll be a star, just like I am."

Whether or not such sentiments motivated Bremer's attack is a moot question, though they strongly suggest megalomania, that flip side of the schizoid-paranoid personality a psychiatrist detected after the attempt on Wallace. But it's far from moot that Bremer's childhood in Milwaukee provided the psychoenvironment we've learned is conducive to creating assassins. His father he perceived as weak, unsuccessful, a nonentity. His mother, he said, was lazy, inattentive and cruel—given to frequent beatings of Arthur and his brothers (one of whom became a confidence man who once was indicted for bilking fat ladies in a weight-salon scam). An indifferent student (I.Q. of 106), the young Bremer grew withdrawn, friendless, invisibly moving into and through an adolescence apparently made bearable by the fantasies he drew from *PLAYBOY*, *Gun Digest*, various soft-core sex comics (these magazines later were found in his bachelor apartment). In his pre-Wallace life, Bremer had one girlfriend, a 15-year-old named Joan Pemrich, who worked as a monitor in the elementary school where Bremer was a janitor. Arthur took it very seriously, pursued her with sweaty earnestness. She did not reciprocate the fervent feelings. Their breakup in January 1972 helped turn Bremer's mind toward political murder, or so some think. Certainly by April, when he began his diary, Bremer's eye was on a compensation beyond love—he would achieve fame through assassination. (That is, it's certain if the diary is his work and not E. Howard Hunt's, as Gore Vidal has speculated. Samples of Bremer's handwriting seem to confirm that he wrote the journal, a fact that doesn't, as we'll see, unknot an

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interesting tie to Hunt, Nixon and the Watergaters.)

By April, Arthur had his gun. Two guns, in fact—the .38 and a 9mm Browning automatic.

They weren't his first weapons. In November 1971—a few months after he'd bought a car and moved out of his folks' house into an apartment—he was arrested while parked in a fashionable residential area with a .38 and two boxes of ammunition. No one can say what, if anything, he intended, though a psychiatrist has said Arthur was out target practicing that day—like Sirhan, Guiteau, Oswald—and had then decided to rob some houses. Also, about this time, the doctor says, Bremer thought about shooting his female boss at the Milwaukee Athletic Club, where he worked at a second menial job. Thus, Bremer seemingly had violent urges before his trauma with Permich, which did, however, unhinge him enough to make him shave his head and, like Sirhan, quit his jobs.

He soon started working as a Wallace volunteer, probably as much for the free meals as for the ideology. One supposition has Bremer shooting Wallace out of an identification with oppressed blacks, a contention that the diary's right-wing rantings refute. Arthur was frugal. Much has been supposed about where he got the money to follow Nixon and Wallace, some thinking it came from a conspiracy's masterminds. But he had made about \$9000 before he quit and he had only about two dollars on him when he was arrested. He recorded money worries in his diary. There were few luxuries. His battered 1967 Rambler cost only \$795. Aside from a fling at the Waldorf-Astoria, he stayed in modest lodgings. (One sad extravagance was a New York massage parlor, where a comely masseuse jerked him off and ripped him off for \$48.) The chronicle of his days is actually that of a mind slipping from control, as he trails Nixon to New York, Canada, Washington. He writes, "This will be one of the most closely read pages since the *Scrolls* in those caves. . . . My fuse is about burnt. There's gona be an explosion soon." He wants to kill millions, especially "Nixy." But the President, he finds, is too closely guarded, though he got within 12 feet of Nixon's car in Ottawa. Then, in May, he writes, "I've decided Wallace will have the honor of—what would you call it?" Characteristically, he frets that editors won't care if Wallace is assassinated. About then, too, Arthur began observing and commenting on himself going mad. "NURSE! GET THE JACKET!" he scrawled. As Wallace's "Send 'em a message" campaign accelerated, Bremer voyaged through Wisconsin and Michigan, appearing at rallies, even being photographed in plastic Wallace boaters (afterward, Wallace workers said, sure, they recognized the little creep, and police

once questioned him). He gleefully noted the many lapses in Wallace's security. Like Robert de Niro's taxi driver, he sometimes chatted with Secret Servicemen.

At last, after driving to Maryland on May 13, Bremer's chance came. Wallace now lies, like all the political victims before him, in his own pooling blood. A bullet has severed nerve ganglia near the 12th thoracic vertebra. He will never walk again, or control his bowels, or be elected President—something that the overwhelming primary victories in Michigan and Maryland, after the shooting, had made seem quite possible.

Like many of our acts of political violence, the reverberations are unexpected, even ironic. For instance, no outraged black shot Wallace, the man who had stood in the schoolhouse door. A white did. And Wallace, the law-and-order (and pro-gun) candidate, fell victim to an armed criminal. Moreover, a criminal whose study of Oswald and Sirhan demonstrated a domino effect more devastating to Wallace than the one he excoriated in Southeast Asia. And just as the deaths of King and Kennedy brought legislative effort for civil rights and against guns (only partly successful), so Wallace's crippling brings on calls for harsher, swifter justice—especially from Agnew and Nixon.

Yet, some effects were to be expected. A trial for the accused, the contention he was sane enough to know what he was doing and the eventual guilty verdict and sentence—in Bremer's case, to 63 years. And the rumors of conspiracies.

Wallace to this day believes Bremer was an agent (no lone gunman could get *him!*) and he doubts that Arthur wrote the diary. Conspiracy lovers predictably suppose a second gunman lurking somewhere undetected in the crowd. Nearly half of Americans are disbelievers and suspect conspiracy, just as they do about the murders of the Kennedys and King. Bremer's father thinks his son needed to be directed to his act, not being much of a self-starter and certainly never before in trouble. Bremer's mother conjectures it was something he ate, or maybe "one of those false cigarettes" that drove him mad (but Bremer seems not to have used any drugs). Even the Government kept open the question of a conspiracy. But, to date, only one curious set of occurrences suggests anyone besides Bremer was involved.

Enter the infamous E. Howard Hunt, Watergate burglar, spybook author and former CIA spook. In testimony before the Senate committee investigating Watergate, Hunt said that the now-devout Charles Colson had suggested to Hunt that Hunt might want to "review the contents of Bremer's apartment." Colson was acting, it's reported, on Nixon's direct order, and though Colson denies having made any such suggestion to

Hunt, the questions persist: Why were the plumbers interested in Bremer? Would White House tapes thus far withheld by President Ford reveal the reason?

Further, what about the curiously complete amount of background information about Bremer that was found in his apartment? Was the reportorial treasure-trove obligingly planted by the FBI and Secret Servicemen who preceded newsmen there? Did they at the same time remove anything that might have implicated The Committee to Re-Elect the President (Nixon, that is)?

It's possible to envision Bremer as part of a "dirty tricks" campaign, perhaps being manipulated to scare Wallace out of the race so that the incumbent President could take over the law-and-order issue. Or, if the imagination runs riot, one could fantasize Bremer as the ultimate dirty trick, a directed killer, or as a dangerous psychotic who was suddenly, madly, out of his employers' control. Frightening and unlikely as such speculations are, it's true that a confessed dirty trickster—Donald Segretti—was asked by the Senate's Watergate committee if he knew Bremer. Segretti firmly said no.

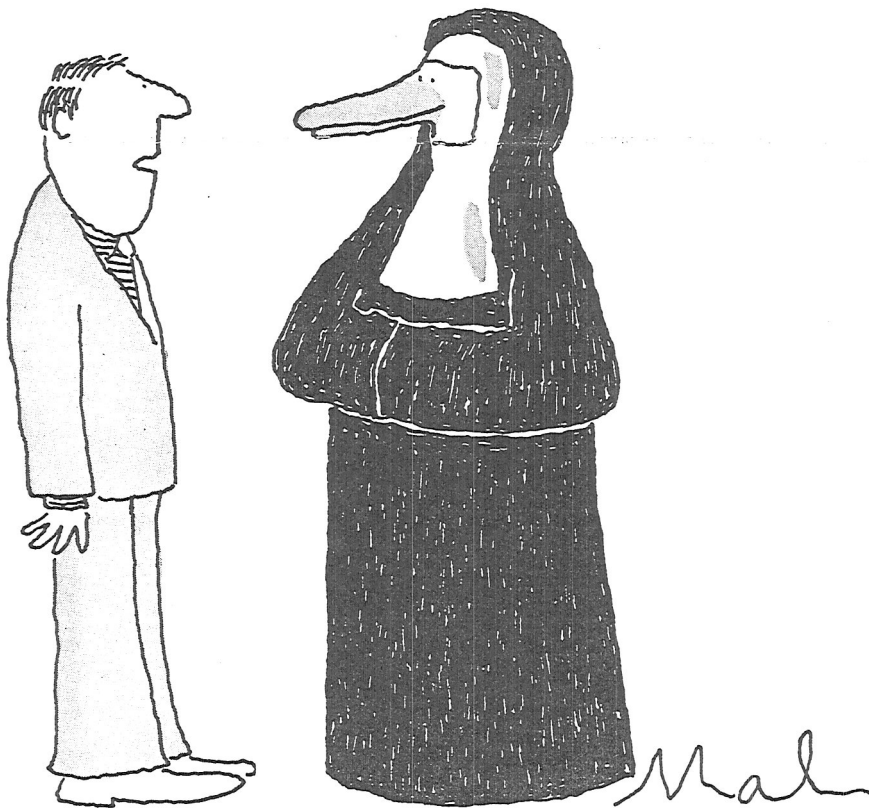
We don't have evidence of anyone's contacts with possible conspirators. Or evidence of payoffs. Or evidence of anything except the smiling Bremer, his blond hair and his blue revolver glinting in the May sunshine. That, and the paralyzed Wallace—recently taunted by students in Bremer masks pushing wheel-

chairs—who over and over muses that it just couldn't be that simple.

Yet, it comes to that, whether or not conspiracies exist. Booth, Guiteau, Czolgosz, Schrank, Zangara, Weiss, Oswald, Ray, Sirhan, Bremer. They have lock-stepped through our history with guns and scarred psyches, with real ills and imagined causes that become excuses to kill. Not long ago Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme and Sara Jane Moore brought femininity to the roster of those who would kill our leaders. We tried to explain that as we have tried to explain the others.

It's said the one is Manson-crazy, acting out of a soul diseased by her despicable guru. The other, it's thought, is an unstable woman, who, in a liberated era, was trying to find her place and, frustrated, decided on violence as the way.

But is there any answer to the riddle of why assassins are always with us? No sociology, no psychology, no political analysis, no commission has yet found an answer or devised a cure. No judge or executioner has yet stayed an assassin's hand. Perhaps that is impossible. Perhaps there is a Cain deep in some of us, an urge pulsing through our hearts to kill the chief, to extinguish forever another's authority over us—an urge as primal, as fundamental, as implacable as evil itself. If so—and it seems that way—the question is not if another American assassin will strike. It is when.



"Not the Mother Goose."